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POEMS  
ON  
ASHTON AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

BY  
REV. W. B. KIRK, LL.D.

1/6

FROM A BOOK FUND COMMEMORATING  
RUTH GERALDINE ASHEN  
CLASS OF 1931

It's a sad thing  
when a man is to be so soon forgotten  
And the shining in his soul  
gone from the earth  
With no thing remaining;

And it's a sad thing  
when a man shall die  
And forget love  
which is the shiningness of life;

But it's a sadder thing  
that a man shall forget love  
And he not dead but walking in the field  
of a May morning  
And listening to the voice of the thrush.

— R.G.A., in *A Yearbook of  
Stanford Writing*, 1931

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18

*Mrs Hutchinson*

# POEMS

ON

ST. PETER'S CHURCH AND PARISH,

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE,

THE

ANTIQUITIES OF ASHTON

AND NEIGHBOURHOOD,

AND THE ANCIENT CUSTOMS OF

*THE BLACK LAD, & WAKES.*

BY

W. B. KIRK, B.A., LL.D.,

*Vicar of St. Peter's.*

JOHN HEYWOOD,

DEANSGATE AND RIDGEFIELD, MANCHESTER;

AND 11, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS,

LONDON.

1883.

Spec.  
6-15. 21

JOHN HEYWOOD,  
EXCELSIOR PRINTING WORKS, HULME HALL ROAD,  
MANCHESTER.

To the  
Right Hon. The Countess of Stamford and Warrington,  
These Poems  
Are, by gracious permission  
Of her Ladyship,  
Most respectfully Dedicated by  
The Author.





## P R E F A C E.

---

THESE few verses are written with the desire that all who live in these parts may be made better acquainted with the very ancient and interesting history of Ashton-under-Lyne and neighbouring towns, and also that the parishioners of St. Peter's Church may see how deeply I appreciate their great attachment to the Church and its burial ground.

Their marked attention to the tombs and graves of the dear departed, the wreaths, fresh flowers, and touching mottoes, testify to their kind, affectionate hearts.

If I have failed in my description of those matters so interesting to them, I trust they will be merciful in their criticism, and give me credit for having written with the sincere desire of setting forth their many virtues as worthy of imitation.

W. B. K.

ST. PETER'S VICARAGE,

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE,

*September 10, 1883.*





## ANTIQUITY OF ASHTON AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

---

**A** SHTON is a Saxon name,  
So called from "Ash" and "Tun;"  
For ash trees lined the river,  
And "Tun" means place or town;  
But the affix, "under-Lyne,"  
There is some doubt upon,  
I will give however the  
Best interpretation.

Manchester was a Roman  
Station in Lancashire,  
Aldmondbury also was  
A station in Yorkshire.  
Rome wished to connect these towns,  
So made a road in time,  
Skirting the tract of country  
Called since that "Lyne" or "Lyme."\*

---

\* See Edwin Butterworth's "Historical A count of Ashton, &c."  
Published 1842.

This road went right through Oldham,  
 And onwards towards the north,  
 Entering Ashton (now so called)  
 Near Lees and Saddleworth.

There still remain some traces  
 Of this old Roman way  
 Near the township of Failsworth,  
 Of course in much decay.  
 To open out the forests  
 And wishing to subdue  
 The natives, they made a trench  
 Through the hills with that view.

The Saxons, out of respect  
 For such a truly fine  
 Work, gave the appellative  
 Now known as "under Lyne,"  
 Or "*beneath the trench.*" This is  
 Now considered to be  
 By historians the best way  
 Of solving the mystery.

John Whitaker, a parson,  
 Has written much upon  
 The great antiquity of  
 The suburbs and Ashton.

In these parts Druids were priests  
 To the Setantii for five\*  
 Centuries before Christ came,  
 And relics still survive.†  
 They who recorded the deeds  
 Of chiefs in poetry  
 Were called "Bards," who committed  
 It all to memory.

'Tis thought the early mansion  
 Of Bardsley was the spot  
 Where these Druidical bards  
 Composed what they *wrote* not.  
 Here amidst the shady woods  
 Priestly idolaters  
 Waved their magic wands around  
 Their unhewn rough altars.‡

---

\* A wandering tribe, said to have invaded this part of the province 500 years B. C.

† The antiquities of the parish connected with the remote era of Druidism were in existence within memory, and consisted of two circular basins wrought out of solid rock. The Medlock now flows over part of the rock. The larger is yet discoverable below a weir or dam at the coal works in Rocher Vale, Knott Lanes; it is 6ft. in diameter and 3ft. in depth. The smaller, now buried under an embankment, is perfectly circular and smooth within, and is represented to be of the somewhat extraordinary dimensions of nine inches in width and 18ft. in depth. According to Barlase such basins were for "lustrations and purifications by water." These remains were known by the common name of "*Pots and Pans*."—Edwin Butterworth's "*History of Ashton, &c.*"

‡ The word Bardsley signifies the "Bard's Field," and it is well known the bards of ancient days were the historians, the heralds, and poets of the days of Druidism, and composed the hymns used by the priests when celebrating their mystical rites. (See James Butterworth's "*History of Ashton*," page 23.)

In long white garments, before  
 The sacred mistletoe  
 They uttered lengthened praises  
 Of their favourite hero,  
 Their temples being encircled  
 With strange fantastic wreaths,  
 Made with their own priestly hands  
 Of the grand old oak leaves.

On their heads they wore a crown  
 With serpent's egg, a sign  
 That their priestly order  
 Should be looked on as divine.  
 Their altars, or their "Cromlechs,"  
 The Arch-Druid's rude chair,  
 And sacred circle of stones,  
 Are still existing elsewhere.

At Stonehenge the most perfect  
 Of these rough stones are seen,  
 Where through the wreck of time, they  
 In solitude have been  
 Puzzling the antiquary,  
 And lasting monuments  
 Of dark mysterious ages  
 And their obscure events.

The central altar stone, oft  
 Sprinkled with human gore

By Druid priests, around which  
They learned their mystic lore,  
Like a rock immovable  
Stands to the present day,  
And, amidst all changing things,  
Seems to resist decay.

There are mysteries visible  
Well as invisible ;  
And both will sometimes puzzle  
As to fact or fable.  
The Round Towers of Ireland,  
Standing there for ages,  
Are visible mysteries  
Defying the Sages.

The Pyramids of Egypt,  
Known to the world so well,  
What are they ? and who built them  
None can for certain tell.  
Thousands have from age to age  
Come from all parts to seek  
Some news from these ancient stones.  
But they're too old to speak.

Those moss-grown stones in Stonehenge  
Telling of times long gone ;  
Though mysterious, yet wise men  
Are more agreed upon.



We shall now leave these curious  
 Strange relics to their fate,  
 And will go to Dukinfield,  
 A place of ancient date ;  
 And of Saxon origin,  
 So named by them after  
 A victory over the Danes\*  
 Of terrible slaughter.

When the standard of the Danes,  
 With its proud flag flying,  
 Passed through the hosts of Saxons  
 O'er the dead and dying.  
 Ah ! little thought the bearer,  
 While holding it on high,  
 That soon his noble standard  
 Would in the vile dust lie.

Through many a battlefield  
 It passed victorious on  
 Till torn into tatters  
 By Irish and Saxon.  
 At Clontarf, Bryan Boroimhet†  
 Like a wolf from his sleep,  
 Rushed on the proud invaders,  
 And scattered them like sheep.

\* See Edwin Butterworth's "History of Ashton" &c.

† See Martin's "History of Ireland." The battle was fought on Good Friday, 1014. 11,000 Danes were slain.

These hardy Northmen met their  
 Match, when they measured swords  
 With this Irish King, and his  
 Infuriated hordes.

And here the pale-faced Saxons,  
 With fire in each eye,  
 Stopped them on this nameless field  
 And bade them yield or die.

When vict'ry crowned their efforts  
 They gave the place a name,  
 And stamped imperishably  
 The glory of their fame.  
 In the din of the battle  
 The banner was taken,  
 On it a Raven was traced  
 In Danish called "Doken."

"Evermore," said the conqueror,  
 "Let this place be given\*  
 The name of 'Dockinveldt,' or  
 The '*field of the Raven* ;'"  
 Thus this place of the Raven  
 Where the Danes had to yield  
 Retains its name to this day  
 In that of Dukinfield.

---

\* See Edwin Butterworth.

But if a Saxon triumph  
 Gave this town a name,  
 So a Danish conqueror  
 For Knott's Hill did the same.  
 It has been said that the name  
 Of "Canute" may be found  
 In the corrupted "Nute," or  
 Knott Hill. We have some ground

For thinking so, as we learn  
 From tradition that he,  
 The great Danish conqueror,  
 Passed through in his journey  
 When going from the West Sea  
 To the East, and Knott Hill,  
 In Saddleworth, as where he  
 Harangued his troops so well.

---

Previous to describing some  
 Old customs, let me call  
 Your attention to that fine  
 Strong structure, *Ashton Hall*.

This very interesting  
 Old Hall of Ashton was  
 Occupied by the late Lord  
 Stamford and Warrington.

A nobleman famous for  
His generosity,  
And a worthy scion of  
An ancient pedigree.

Time has left but little more  
Than the well-chosen site  
Of the rude fort, denoting  
The days of Saxon might,  
When this strong "outpost" was built  
On the pretty borders  
Of the Tame, as a safeguard  
Against marauders.

Sweet fertile plains went sloping  
Down to the river's side,  
Where flourished the graceful ash,  
In rich profusion wild ;  
The cattle grazed upon the  
Slopes adorned with trees,  
And all the prospect round was  
One to soothe and please.

The scene is changed—centuries  
Have passed, and nought is seen  
Of all the tranquil landscape  
Of river, wood, and green.

Steam, like a magician's wand,  
Has chased these scenes away,  
And through its means brought in  
A bright and better day.

Houses in hundreds crowd the  
Valleys and the hills,  
And smoke from lofty chimneys  
Half hides the cotton mills.  
The din of honest labour  
Seems like a voice to me  
Of triumph rejoicing o'er  
The fall of slavery.

For still the dungeon towers  
Of Norman times remain  
To tell of wretched captives  
Bound with the tyrant's chain.  
Another prison within  
Where men bewailed their fate  
Is now a large iron safe  
For deeds of the estate.

A subterranean way  
Made from the cellar wall  
Beneath the mouldering dead  
Connects the church and hall,

Through which the holy fathers  
 Passed in times gone by,  
 To give their absolution  
 To those condemned to die.

Such halls as these speak loudly  
 Of the violence done  
 By men, when once permitted  
 To reign, and rule *alone*.

Sir J. Assheton in Henry  
 The Sixth's reign abode here,  
 With lordly power and in the  
 Style of feudal splendour.  
 The baronial hall is gone ;  
 The festive sounds are hushed ;  
 Tyrants long have passed away,  
 And people whom they crushed.

Here the ancient "Yule Log" burned  
 Upon the open hearth,  
 And the "Ale Horn" handed round  
 Creating rustic mirth ;  
 While the great lord proudly sat  
 Surrounded with his court  
 On a gallery set apart  
 From all the baser sort.\*

---

\* Edwin Butterworth on Ashton-under-Lyne, page 36.

Wo ! to him at the "Yule feast"  
 When drinking the "Church ale"  
 If his conduct should appear  
 To deserve reproof while  
 At the festive board ; for  
 There the Prefect\* lingers  
 With his pair of small stone stocks  
 To confine his fingers.

Sad times when men would submit  
 To any tyrant's will ;  
 Plough, harrow, grind at their mills ;  
 Then let them strike or kill.  
 Life and death were in the hands  
 Of the Lords of Assheton ;  
 And near the Hall are traces  
 Of the thick-walled dungeon.

Where on the slightest complaint  
 These serfs were held captive  
 Till led out to "Gallows Field"†  
 Where soon they ceased to live.

\* Or Lord of Misrule.

† The railway now runs through this field.

Where Lords could hang their serfs at once,  
 Nor give a reason why ;  
 And ladies loved that tourney most,  
 Where most were doomed to die.

This tyrant power extended  
 Even beyond the grave,  
 Nor was satisfied until  
 The poor relatives gave

Their second best beast to him,  
 After the "Holy Kirk"\*  
 Had got *the best*,—just reward  
 For all its pious work !  
 These two great powers were ready†  
 At any death to fall  
 On the survivors' goods and  
 To take away their all.

The only cow was often  
 Compelled to go before  
 The funeral, till it reached  
 The Church's open door ;  
 This was called "the heriot cow,"‡  
 A Saxon word for *fee* ;

\* See Baines' "Lancashire," vol. I.

† The priest as well as the Lord of the Manor claimed his heriot. This was originally a voluntary gift, and hence called a "corse present," but it afterwards grew into a claim, and was insisted upon by the clergy till the time of the Reformation.—Baines' "Lancashire," Vol I., page 427.

‡ Dr. Hibbert Ware relates the following :—A tenant's boy on the death of his father, driving an only cow to the Manor House of Dukinfield, being met by the Lord (Sir Robert Dukinfield), with whose person and rank the boy was unacquainted, was questioned whither he was taking his beast. "I am driving it to Dukinfield for the heriot," said the boy. "My father is dead, we are many children, and have no cow but this ; don't you think the Devil will take Sir Robert for a heriot when he dies?" "Return home," said the knight. "Take the cow back to thy mother. I know Sir Robert. I am going to Dukinfield myself, and I will make the matter up with him."



Claimed by the Church and landlord  
From the deceased family.

Lines by Sir David Lindsay  
Describe the cruelty  
Of this horrible practice  
In a most touching way.

“And also the vicar, as I trow  
Will not fail to take a cow,  
And uppermost cloths though babes them an,  
From a poor seely husbandman  
When he lyes ready to dy,  
Having small children two or three,  
And his three kine withouten mo,  
The vicar must have one of tho ;  
With the gray cloke that covers the bed  
Howbeit that they be poorly cled ;  
And if the wife die on the morn  
And all the babes should be forlorn  
The other cow he takes away.  
With her poor cote and petycote gray :  
And if within two days or three  
The eldest child shall happen to dye  
Of the third cow he shall be sure  
When he hath under his cure :  
And father and mother both dead be,  
Beg must the babes without remedy ;

They hold the corse at the Church style  
 And thare it must remain awhile,  
 Till they get sufficient surety  
 For the Church right and duty ;  
 Then comes the landlord perforce  
 And takes to him the fattest horse."

No doubt the heriot was  
 Driven to the door  
 Of the Ashton Parish Church,  
 The church long built before  
 The present one, but burned down  
 Sixty-two years ago,  
 Leaving but very little  
 Of the old walls to shew.

St. Michael's was a parish  
 Church in twelve ninety-one,\*  
 And is said to have been built  
 By Sir John Huntington ;†  
 Before the rood gallery  
 Had been taken away,  
 Many of the seats were carved  
 In the art of that day.

With figures of men with dogs,‡  
 And a stag, to imply

\* See Baines's "Lancashire," vol. 1, page 424.

† See James Butterworth's "Ashton, &c.," page 74.

‡ See James Butterworth on "Ashton, &c.," pub. 1823.

"Hunting," the other side had  
 A "tun," which might defy  
 Our understanding if we  
 Had not some one to tell  
 That this "tun" in English means  
 Any kind of vessel.

These two signs put together  
 Preserved the founder's name,  
 As an hieroglyphic  
 To hand him down to fame ;  
 Under the seats of other  
 Pews, were carvings in wood,  
 Also, of old families  
 Throughout the neighbourhood.

The Church inside at present  
 Is elegant and chaste,  
 With lofty Gothic arches  
 And carved with greatest taste.  
 Few towns of Ashton's size can  
 Boast of such a splendid  
 Parish church, or of one that  
 Is so well attended.

But the cruel flames have left  
 Through their severity  
 No interesting relics  
 Of its antiquity,

Except some few pieces of  
 Mutilated stained glass  
 In the windows at west end  
 Placed in a confused mass.

The only wall of the old church  
 Which could tell of the past,  
 After defying many  
 Ages, is doomed at last.  
 This east end wall has been found  
 Dangerous, and this day  
 Many workmen are employed  
 In taking it away.

---

### THE BLACK LAD.

There are a few strange customs  
 In the towns and country  
 Practised for many ages  
 Few people knowing why.

Such, for instance, as the "Wakes,"  
 And "Riding the Black Lad,"  
 A stranger coming amongst us  
 Might think we all went mad.  
 To see a man on horseback,  
 With blackened face and followed  
 With imprecations, and shouts  
 By thousands in a crowd.

But as to its origin  
 There is no certainty,  
 It may arise from good deeds  
 Or deeds of villainy.

The late Doctor Hibbert Ware  
 (A good authority)  
 Tells us of "Sir Ralph Assheton,"  
 Of great brutality.  
 Who in Henry the Sixth's reign  
 Committed violent  
 Excesses, when he was made  
 A "Tower Lieutenant."

In order to understand\*  
 What these excesses were  
 You must know that in Scotland,  
 As well as in Yorkshire,  
 There existed a weed called  
 "Guld," with a yellow flower,  
 Most pernicious, and certain  
 People were given power

To levy a penalty  
 On those who neglected  
 To have the weeds removed when  
 The ground was inspected.

---

\* See Baines's "Lancashire."

This old ceremony of  
 Going the rounds searching  
 For the "Guld" was known by  
 The name of "Guld-riding."

And they were most exacting  
 If "corn guld" was found  
 To claim the "wether sheep" for  
 Having it in their ground.  
 In the days of this dread knight  
 The same weed grew upon  
 The low land, named "Sour Carr,"  
 Bordering on Ashton.

Sir Ralph was given for life  
 The sole authority  
 To collect fines, which he did  
 With great severity.  
 On a certain day in Spring\*  
 He went in black armour  
 (Whence his name of the "Black Lad")  
 Mounted on a charger,

And, attended by a train  
 Of many followers,  
 Spared *none* whose fields were found with  
 "Carr-guld," or yellow flowers.

---

\* Easter Monday.

All the tenants of Ashton  
Trembled when they saw him,  
Knowing that he would not have  
Any mercy on them.

Tis said he put some people  
In barrels, filled with nails,  
And rolled them down the grassy  
Hillocks, into the vales.  
These rising grounds may still be  
Seen at the present day  
From the east end of the hall,  
Not many yards away.

But such a wretch could not long  
Escape ; the corridor  
Is still in the hall, unchanged,  
Where from a bedroom door  
A young woman in her rage  
Rushed out, and with a dagger  
Slew him in the passage.

Tradition has handed down  
Some lines upon his name,  
Which will ever stamp him with  
Unenviable fame.

“ Sweet Jesu, for thy mercy’s sake,  
And for thy bitter passion,  
Save us from the axe of the Tower,  
And from Sir Ralph of Assheton.”

## THE WAKES.

In the origin of "Wakes"  
 There's no uncertainty,  
 Being introduced amongst us  
 With Christianity.  
 At the present day, *all* creeds,  
 Church and Dissent as well,  
 Join, in what is really a  
 Thorough Church Festival.

But like other seasons of  
 Rejoicing in the year  
 Regarded as holidays,  
 Few even think or care  
 Why these days were appointed,  
 Or what their meaning is,  
 So long as they have pleasure  
 In their festivities.

In five hundred and ninety-  
 Six Augustine was sent  
 From Rome to preach the Gospel ;  
 Ethelbert, King of Kent,  
 Was the first King converted,  
 As well as his people,  
 At last the whole Heptarchy  
 Followed their example.



When Augustine landed in  
 The Isle of Thanet, he  
 Was met by King Ethelbert  
 With great civility ;  
 But fearing he might practise  
 Some strange magic spell  
 He heard in the *open air*  
 The words of the Gospel.

But it must be borne in mind  
 That Christianity  
 Was known in the British Isles  
 In the *first century* ;  
 The Apostle Paul himself  
 It is thought came from Spain,  
 And preached the Cross to those  
 Residing in Britain.

So when Augustine arrived  
 At the Pope's command  
 He found an old British Church  
 Existing in the land ;  
 And the Venerable Bede,  
 In his hist'ry has told,  
 That Augustine's was the *new*\*  
 The *British* Church the *old*.

---

\* See Dr. Blakeney on the Prayer Book.

The same historian tells us  
 The wife of Ethelbert  
 Was a Christian, and had been  
 For some time a convert ;  
 She went to the old British  
 Church,\* known as St. Martin's,  
 Near Canterbury, built in  
 The time of the Romans.

Augustine always worshipped  
 In this old Saint Martin's,  
 With his followers, and some  
 Part of it still remains  
 Just outside Canterbury,  
 Upon a rising height,  
 And churches ever since have  
 Been built upon its site.

We therefore see the kingdom†  
 Was prepared to receive  
 The Christian instruction which  
 Augustine came to give.

\* Dr. Blakeney's Prayer Book, page 8 ; also Robertson's " History of the Christian Church," vol. ii., page 388.

† Bede testifies that the Kingdom of Northumbria was converted by the Scots—the ancient name of the Irish—and Camden, the historian, says : " The Irish scholars of St. Patrick (latter end of 5th century) so excelled in learning and piety, that they sent whole flocks of most holy men into all parts of Europe, who were founders of the most ancient monasteries, both there and in Britain, and as a mark of pre-eminence Ireland obtained the title of ' Insula Sanctorum et Doctorum.' "

The old British Churches which  
 The Saxons had not laid  
 In ruins, were now repaired,  
 Though very much decayed ;  
 And many *Heathen Temples*\*  
 Also dedicated  
 To Christ, were with much pomp and  
 Splendour, consecrated.

To commemorate these  
 Deeds, the Saxon nation  
 Ordained a festival called  
 "Feast of Dedication ;"†  
 This feast of the early dawn  
 Of Christianity  
 Was kept by our fathers  
 With great solemnity.

On the eve before this feast,  
 Until the morning breaks,  
 They watch with solemn vigil  
 Which watch they call "*Church Wakes*."

---

\* Pope Gregory had written to Ethelbert exhorting him to destroy the heathen temples in his dominions, but on further consideration, he took a different view of the matter, and sent after Mellitus a letter for the guidance of Augustine, desiring him not to destroy the temples ; but if they were well built, to purify them with holy water, and convert them to the worship of the true God ; thus it was hoped the people might be the more readily attracted to the new religion, if its rites were celebrated in places where they had been accustomed to worship. See Robertson's "History of the Christian Church," vol. ii, page 389.

† See Baines's "Lancashire," page 12.

We celebrate a victory  
 With gladness and delight  
 Because our troops have triumphed  
 And put the foe to flight ;  
 But here's a victory greater  
 Than any earth can boast  
 A victory over Satan  
 And his malignant host.

We have seen our land defiled,  
 The land our fathers won,  
 And watched these mighty heroes  
 Bow down to wood and stone ;  
 The trumpet now has sounded  
 The glorious Gospel sound,  
 And all the heathen idols  
 Lie prostrate on the ground.

O ! let it be remembered,  
 When first the Cross was raised,  
 Amidst our heathen darkness,  
 And let the Lord be praised  
 By opening wide our churches  
 On one day in the year,  
 And letting all our people  
 Before the Lord appear.

To praise Him for His goodness  
 In giving us the light,

And crushing Satan's kingdom  
 By the power of His might.  
 If we observed our "Church Wakes"  
 As our forefathers meant  
 We'd use them in like manner  
 As we observe the "Lent."

When Queen Elizabeth saw  
 The ill effects increase  
 Of holding annual wakes  
 She ordered them to cease.  
 In fifty years afterwards  
 They were commenced once more,  
 But not so coarse and brutal  
 As they were held before.

At the present day they are  
 Throughout all Lancashire  
 Regarded as the festivals  
 Of pleasure and good cheer;  
 The religious element,  
 I much regret to say,  
 By frivolous amusement,  
 Is driven quite away.

The pious aim of these wakes  
 Too soon was laid aside,  
 And a wholesale revelry  
 Was practised far and wide.

They desecrated churchyards  
 With tents for "cakes and ale,"  
 And booths with all kinds of ware  
 Put up to public sale.

Many hawkers and merchants  
 Regularly met there,  
 Till the Dedication Feast  
 Became a common fair.  
 In the reign of King Edward  
 The First a law was made  
 That churchyards should no longer  
 Be used for such a trade.

And Henry the Sixth ordained  
 There should be no display  
 Of wares and merchandise on  
 A Church festival day.

If the object of the wakes  
 Was always borne in mind,  
 And religiously observed,  
 As a time to remind  
 Us of our own darkened state,  
 Then no doubt we should see  
 More rational enjoyment  
 And less frivolity.

By our Church it is ordained  
 That sermons in each year  
 Should be preached for the heathen  
 In churches everywhere.  
 Let them at the same time make  
 The people understand  
 What God has done for *us* in  
 This highly-favoured land.

Why should we not keep the day  
 When Ethelbert the King\*  
 Was baptized on Whit-Sunday  
 As the time to begin  
 Our mission services ? for  
 Christianity then  
 Like a latent spark burst forth  
 Lighting the souls of men.

Three bishoprics were founded  
 By this royal Saxon—  
 Canterbury, Rochester,  
 And the See of London.

It matters little who was  
 The first to break the spell  
 Of the dismal dark long night  
 When idolatry fell ;

---

\*A.D. 597.

When Moses in his wrath had  
Broken the Lord's command,  
The waters were not hindered  
From flowing through the sand.

The Isra'lites did not stop  
To look and ask and think,  
But, parched with thirst, rushed forward,  
And eagerly did drink.  
What time better could there be  
Than Whitsuntide, when first  
The missionary Spirit of  
Christ in tongues of fire burst

Upon a godless world—  
What better time to pray  
That all heathen darkness might  
Be scattered by the day?  
May we to whom is given  
The priceless blood-bought seed  
Be thankful for our mercies,  
And give to those who need.







ST. PETER'S CHURCH, ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE.





ST. PETER'S CHURCH AND PARISH,  
ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE.

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PART II.

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**H**AVE you seen St. Peter's Church  
In Ashton-under-Lyne?  
'Tis a Gothic edifice  
Of excellent design.

No church perhaps in England  
Has such a noble site,  
On every side it shews  
Its proud majestic height.

The dwellings stand far backward  
As if they wished to leave  
The church, like some proud giant,  
Plenty of room to breathe.

Two decorative black ink smudges or flourishes, one on the left and one on the right, positioned below the final line of text.

It guards the town of Ashton  
 At west of Stamford-street,  
 And its brilliant lit up clocks  
 Direct the traveller's feet.

The tower (styled by architects  
 The perpendicular)  
 Is without exception the  
 Most elegant by far

Of any that we have seen.  
 Graceful pinnacles crown  
 The top, and slender windows  
 Are placed the whole way down.

When measuring the tower  
 It proved a lofty one—  
 A hundred and twenty-eight  
 Feet to the topmost stone.

The parapet round the top  
 Is elegant and light,  
 Being perforated all through,  
 Shewing well from the height.

The architect of this church  
 Was Mr. F. Goodwin,  
 Of London ; no architect  
 A greater fame could win.

This church alone would make him  
 Unequalled in his art,  
 For beauty, strength, proportion,  
 Is stamped on every part.\*

It cost fourteen thousand pounds,  
 A large sum in that day ;  
 To build it now for twenty  
 Thousand could never pay.

Three clocks are in the tower placed,  
 And in the east end one,  
 The generous gift of him  
 Who to his rest is gone.

A peal of eight bells also  
 Was given by the same,  
 Whose tongues of silvery sweetness  
 Pay tribute to his name.

Where good deeds are remembered,  
 Or Ashton's name is heard,  
 The name of Heginbottom  
 Will be a household word.

---

\* The *New Church*, which was founded October 24, 1821, when finished will be as perfect a model of lightness, combined with elegance, in the commanding Gothic style, as may justly challenge competition with some of the first structures of this kind in the kingdom. The architect is Francis Godwin, Esq., of Bedford-street, London. — See James Butterworth's "Ashton, &c." Published 1821.

A very spacious churchyard  
 The church encircles round,  
 Where thousands upon thousands  
 Await the trumpet's sound.

Through these regions of the dead  
 The worshippers must come,  
 Which may perhaps remind them  
 That this is not their home.

Though all is hushed in silence  
 Within the dismal tomb,  
 Yet still a voice seems warning  
 The living of their doom.

Ere in the church they enter,  
 A sermon they may hear  
 From new-made graves and tombstones  
 Each Sunday in the year.

But they who learn this lesson,  
 Alas ! how few they be.  
 Ears have they, and they hear not,  
 And eyes, which cannot see.

Scenes solemn and impressive  
 No feeling will impart ;  
 If they are each day objects,  
 They fail to touch the heart.

Behold the sexton digging  
A grave in yonder spot !  
'Tis custom makes it easy ;  
Therefore he heeds it not.

He tolls the funeral bell,  
And places on the bier  
The coffin for the mourners,  
But never sheds a tear.

Nor may the last obsequies,  
So oft before his eyes,  
Have ever power to make him  
Unto salvation wise.

God's Holy Spirit alone  
Can raise our hearts from earth,  
And make us ever longing  
For that new heavenly birth.

'Tis not the sculptured figure  
Of Jesus on the Cross  
That melts the heart, and makes us  
Content to bear our loss.

High architectural art  
Some solemn feelings may  
Create within the careless,  
But soon they pass away.



Some look for super-altars,  
 Crosses, candles, flowers,  
 Processions, genuflexions,  
 And heaps of incense showers.

But he that cannot worship  
 Without such aid as these,  
 Is mocking his Creator  
 When on his bended knees.

If we attend our churches  
 But for the ritual there,  
 I fear we care but little  
 For what we ask in prayer.

Having moralized so long,  
 Let us go in and see  
 If all in St. Peter's Church  
 Is what it ought to be.

---

Say, can you find objection here  
 With anything you see?  
 Criticism we cannot fear  
 'Midst such simplicity.

I need not here my muse invite,  
 Her voice may cease to sound,  
 While I in simple language write  
 Of what I see around.

Here are three galleries, four walls,  
Three windows at east end,  
Six at each side, and choir stalls,  
From whence sweet sounds ascend.

The church is high, and long, and wide,  
As plain as plain can be ;  
No decorations meet the eye,  
There's no art here to see.

Some pews are oblong and some square ;  
The pulpit's carved with taste ;  
The desks at each side used for prayer  
Are pretty and well placed.

Much on the lectern can't be said :  
An eagle carved in oak  
Stands on a block, with wings outspread,  
To hold the Sacred Book.

Perhaps you think it strange to see  
The organ placed so high  
In yonder western gallery,  
And wish to ask me why?

If you but look around you'll know  
There is no chancel here ;  
As, therefore, there's no room below  
It should be placed up there.

An Act of Parliament was made  
 (No Act more truly grand)  
 That there should be a million paid  
 For churches through the land.

This Act in eighteen twenty-one  
 Was passed, in George's reign ;  
 Now note the date, for what *was* done  
 Will not be done again.

These churches had no chancels built,  
 No altars on a height,  
 No columns, or reredos carved and gilt,  
 No "dim religious light."

But they were spacious, plain, and strong,  
 For thousands to come in,  
 And seek forgiveness of their wrong,  
 And mourn them of their sin.

Some grumbling man, perhaps, may say  
 The State was steeped in guilt  
 To give a million pounds away  
 That churches should be built.

Now let me tell that grumbling man,  
 Though it may wound him sore,  
 That since this century began  
 It gave a million more.

Just fancy, such an awful sum,  
And all in eighty years,  
It is enough to strike him dumb  
And fill his eyes with tears.

But if this sum so dreadful sounds  
He more surprised will be  
To know near eighty million pounds\*  
Were raised since *forty-three*

By loving Churchmen good and true  
Who saw the Church's need,  
And gave their gold because they knew  
She spread the precious seed.

I feel I have digressed too much,  
So must at once begin  
To speak about this favourite Church  
And all contained therein.

---

\* Mr. W. H. Houldsworth, M.P., in opening a bazaar for St. Stephen's Church, Hulme, made the following remarks:—"He held in his hand a letter which he had received . . . which reminded him that about £2,000,000 had within the present century been given by the State to Church of England purposes. He wished frankly to admit that that was so. . . . He would remind those who took the view that the Church was State paid because it received that £2,000,000—which was the only sum that had been paid as a State payment that he was aware of—he would remind those bodies that called themselves voluntary, the Dissenting bodies, that they had received from time to time, at any rate in one notable instance, State-pay. He referred to the 'Regius donum' in Ireland, which was a payment by the State to the Presbyterian churches in that country. The £2,000,000 was but a mere drop in the bucket compared with the amount of voluntary contributions which had been given to the Church of England. He was very much struck by a statement made by the Archdeacon of Lancaster, appearing in the paper that morning. He said he found that a sum amounting to £75,000,000 had been raised for the Church of England by voluntary contributions of its members during the last forty years."

The services in this Church  
Are Evangelical,  
Though singing Creed and Psalms  
And every Canticle.

A surplice in the pulpit  
Perhaps you don't admire,  
Nor black gown on the *sexton*,  
Neither surpliced choir.

But we can see no harm  
In having all things done  
In decency and order  
Where God is called upon.

We robe beneath the tower,  
And when we pray and sing,  
We all walk up together,  
And half-past ten begin.

We have no genuflections,  
No turning to the East,  
No Ritualistic teaching,  
And no intoning priest.

Our singers are considered  
To sing with ease and grace,  
And their conduct, I must say,  
Is suited to the place.

They teach in the Sunday Schools,  
 And some superintend,  
 And the boys at their classes  
 Regularly attend.

Large numbers every Sunday  
 In this Church we see,  
 And on certain occasions  
 It's full as it can be.

'Twill hold two thousand people  
 Quite comfortably ;  
 The seats below are rented,  
 The galleries are free.

There are some stained glass windows,  
 Memorials of love,  
 Four of them placed below,  
 And two of them above.

The first, beneath south gallery,  
 Is to Mr. Earnshaw,  
 And the window next it, to  
 Mrs. Sarah Kershaw.

The designs are very good,  
 And the colours blend well ;  
 All the work of master hands  
 You can easily tell.

The first window represents  
 The wise men from afar,  
 Bringing their gifts to the Babe,  
 "Gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

The second, pictures Jesus  
 Presented to the Lord  
 By Simeon, in the Temple,  
 Rejoicing in His word.

The third window on this side,  
 A little lower down,  
 Is to Mr. Thomas Parkes,  
 A clergyman well known.

The Transfiguration you  
 See represented here,  
 For Moses and Elijah  
 At either side appear.

Another of these windows  
 Which I must touch upon,  
 To Mr. Heginbottom,  
 Is put up by his son.

It very well illustrates  
 Christ giving His command  
 To His disciples round Him,  
 To preach in every land.

The first window opposite,  
Over the Font, will be  
Painted for Mrs. Nield, to  
Her husband's memory.

The subject selected by  
Her could not be better—  
Jesus, having been baptized,  
Coming from the water.

Now go to the gallery,  
And see the windows there,  
Two only, small and narrow,  
A neat and pretty pair.

There is a *centre* window  
High up, between these two,  
Large, round, and highly coloured,  
With bright green, red, and blue.

This one with the other two  
Were gifts from our good friend,  
The late George Heginbottom,  
Whose kindness knew no end.

In one you see the Saviour,  
So gentle, meek, and mild,  
With His blessed hand upon  
A helpless little child.



Multitudes of mothers throng,  
And round the Saviour press,  
Bringing their little children  
For Him to touch and bless.

"Suffer the little children  
To come to me." You read  
These precious words down lower ;  
'Twere well to give them heed.

Now let us see the window  
Placed in the other wall,  
And you will find the subject  
Quite different from them all.

Here Christ is represented  
Attesting by His word  
That miracles of healing  
Declare Him Christ the Lord.

The poor man at Bethesda  
For thirty-eight long years  
In vain sought healing power  
Till Jesus calmed his fears

With His sweet voice in telling  
Him "Rise, take up thy bed,  
And walk." He at once arose  
And all his ailments fled.

At the top of each window  
A portrait you may see  
Of the generous donor,  
Famed for his charity.

I now have mentioned all that  
There is here to be seen,  
Except perhaps a very  
Beautiful long glass screen

Stretching right across the church  
To keep out the cold air  
Which chilled all the worshippers  
Before it was put there.

Another screen recently  
Behind the Table placed  
Is of elegant design  
And beautifully traced.

Though *within* the Church there's not  
Much you see artistic,  
Yet still the *tout ensemble*  
Might be called majestic.

Go stand as you enter in  
At the gallery door,  
And you'll confess it noble  
When you have looked it o'er.

There's scarce a spot anywhere  
 But you can plainly see  
 The preacher, and also hear  
 All he says distinctly.

'Twas a splendid sight to see,  
 On the second of May,  
 The vast church crowded throughout  
 On that eventful day.

When hundreds of young people  
 Assembled together  
 To be confirmed, and promise  
 That they would endeavour,

With God's help, to lead a life  
 A Christian ought to lead,  
 Striving against ev'ry sin  
 In word, in thought, and deed.

If only they will follow  
 All the advice they got  
 From our good Diocesan,  
 Happy will be their lot.

---

My reason for describing  
 St. Peter's is merely  
 Because the parishioners  
*Love their church so dearly.*

And what I can say of it  
Will make them more happy  
Than if said of York Minster  
Or Westminster Abbey.


There's no crumbling ruin here,  
No story of the past,  
No tottering aged walls  
With ivy clinging fast.

I can't point out the cloisters  
Where monks in days long gone  
Muttered their "Pater Nosters,"  
Or wailed some dismal song.

There are no broken columns,  
No arches picturesque,  
With lichen and wild flowers crowned,  
Or forms of strange grotesque.

No monuments of ancient date  
To speak of some proud name,  
Or tell of some dead hero  
Yet still alive to fame.

No—our church is but a child,  
Not sixty years of age,  
Too young to be emblazoned  
On history's sacred page.



For it was in twenty-one  
 (The year the grant was made),  
 October twenty-four the  
 Foundation stone was laid

By Doctor Law, who was then  
 Lord Bishop of Chester ;  
 And consecrated twenty-  
 Four, twelfth of December.

Still its associations  
 Endear it to each heart,  
 More than dim antiquity  
 Or monumental art.

For fathers and grandfathers,  
 Wives, friends, and children dear  
 Worshipped in this church, and were  
 Baptized and married here.

And it is the silent dead,  
 That cannot be forgot,  
 Especially invite them  
 To this loved, hallowed spot.

They hear a voice still speaking  
 That others cannot hear ;  
 And though the tomb conceals them,  
 Yet mem'ry brings them near.

Strangers thoughtlessly may pass  
The tombstones on the graves,  
Heedless as the mariner  
Of foam upon the waves.

Children's voices may be heard,  
Full of mirth and glee,  
As they leap from tomb to tomb,  
Singing so merrily.

The sun may shine as sweetly  
As on the leafy grove,  
And birds may chant their music  
Over the dust we love ;

Nature may seem determined  
Her gay attire to wear,  
And never think of churchyards,  
Nor loved ones sleeping there.

But who is this approaching,  
So sad, with measured pace ?  
She passes through the people,  
Nor looks in any face.

With radiant smiles there follows  
A child of three years old,  
Striving in her tiny hands  
Some fresh-culled flowers to hold.

On, on she moves, regardless  
Of all that's passing round ;  
She seeks a grave, nor ceases  
Until that grave is found.

Now o'er that spot she's bending,  
While tears are falling fast ;  
And her poor heart is breaking  
While thinking of the past.

The child throws down the flowers,  
Nor heeds the mother's sighs,  
And, laughing, strews them over  
Where her poor father lies.

With trembling hand the widow  
Has placed within a shade  
The fading flowers the child  
Upon the grave had laid.

Emblems of a fleeting life,  
Bespeaking joys so brief,  
Telling of the Scripture truth—  
We all fade as a leaf.

Then round the shade she puts a  
Motto, with these words on  
(Touching, truthful, loving words)  
"Gone, but not forgotten."

In this then lies the secret  
Of all the great regard  
And love for dear St. Peter's—  
*The cheerless, cold, churchyard.*



They think it sweet to worship  
Near where the dead are laid,  
And in the same pew kneeling  
Where once they often prayed.

Others love this favoured place  
From early memories,  
When they as Sunday scholars  
Sat in the galleries.

Many a wife and husband  
Were infants at the school,  
And played together, and learned  
Sitting on the same stool.

They walked together to church,  
And afterwards they taught  
As teachers, and led others  
To church as teachers ought.

Thus were they trained from childhood  
In school and other ways,  
To love their church, and be good  
Church people all their days.





Train up a child in the way  
 He should go, and when old  
 He will not depart from it,  
 Words more precious than gold.

We know the power of training  
 In ev'ry thing we see ;  
 What would our trees and flowers  
 And animal life be

But for the careful training  
 Which they receive from man, ,  
 In doing for them all that  
 His God-like reason can ?

But as it is easier  
 To fall than rise again,  
 As has been proved by many  
 Inconsiderate men.

I warn you to cultivate  
 The ground that has been sown  
 That by your fruits you may be  
 Here and hereafter known.

The young sapling cared and propped  
 Will stronger grow each day,  
 Till the time at last will come  
 You take the props away.

Then in its own strength standing  
It grows a noble tree,  
Casting a wide-spread shadow  
Where weary men may flee.

At last the lightning strikes it,  
Making a wreck complete,  
Or the terrible tempest  
May hurl it at your feet.

Young men and women, beware,  
Remember what I say :  
If in your own strength standing  
You're sure to fall away.

Through industry and talent  
You may acquire a fame,  
So that there might be thousands  
Familiar with your name ;

But that would not suffice you  
When the fiery tide  
Of trial and sore temptation  
Arise on every side ;

Then like the tree so proudly  
Uplifted to the skies,  
You too may lie as helpless,  
And never more to rise.

A tree attains perfection,  
 And can no better be ;  
 But man's most high attainments  
 Are only vanity.

But by *His* strength supported,  
 And by unceasing prayer,  
 You are made strong in weakness,  
 And proof against despair.

---

I must now say a few words  
 About the happy season  
 Of Whitsuntide, when all walk  
 Each with their best dress on.

Children, parents, the teachers,  
 All that have any regard  
 For themselves, walk in thousands  
 To the parish churchyard.

Ashton gladly turns out to see  
 The children marching through  
 The streets, the girls with ribbons,  
 Hats, feathers, frocks all new.

When they come to the churchyard  
 It is a pretty sight,  
 Many Church Sunday School girls  
 With bouquets, dressed in white.

Every school brings its own band,  
And when they sing their hymns  
They form into line, and the  
Great procession begins.

The streets are thronged with people,  
The clergy take the lead  
In their Academics,  
And move at moderate speed.

The windows are all crowded  
With happy lookers on,  
Flags and banners are flying  
Throughout the procession.

The Parish Church leads the way  
(Worthy of distinction),  
The others according to  
Date of consecration.

An incident connected  
With this annual show  
I cannot help relating,  
Knowing 'twill interest you.

A poor old woman of ninety,  
Perfect in every sense,  
Longed to see the children walk  
Ere she was taken hence.

This wish once more was granted,  
With death so very nigh,  
She came unto the window  
And saw them marching by.

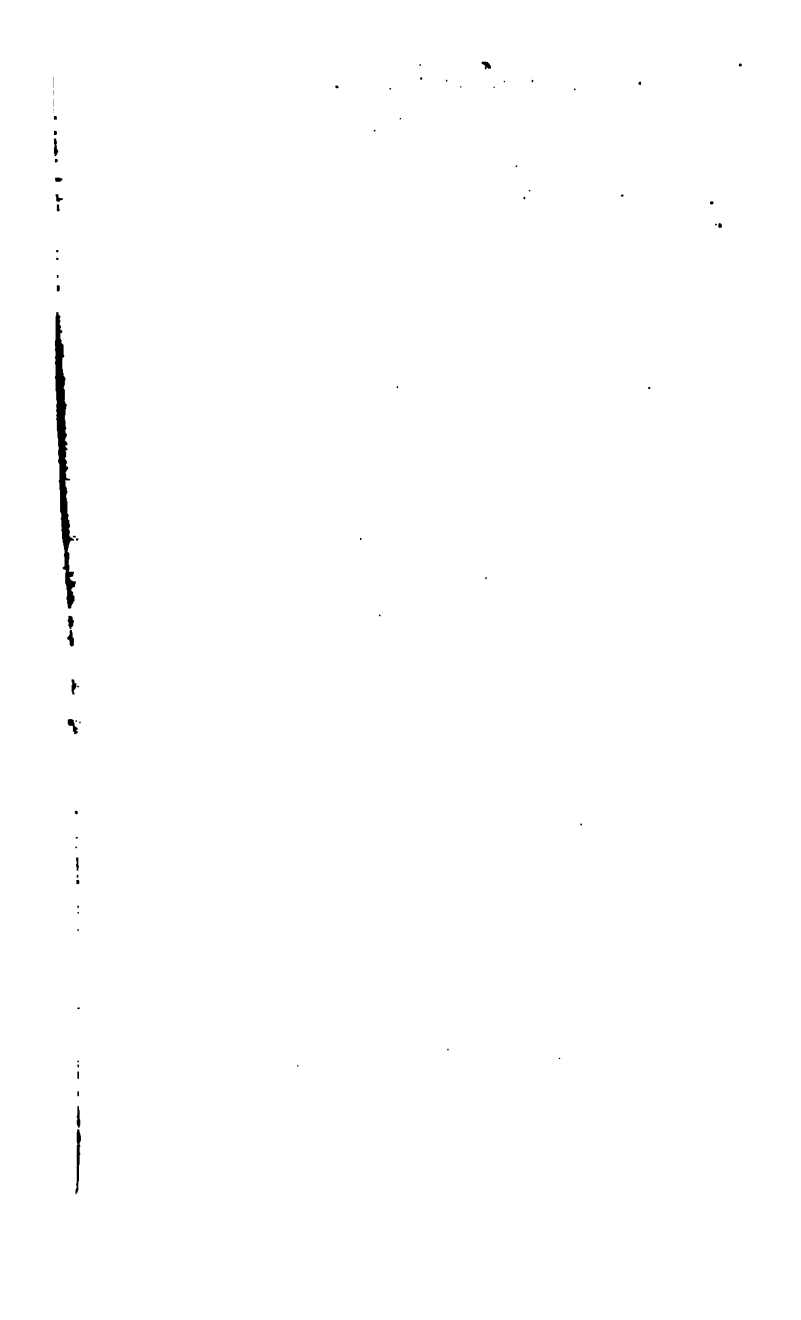
"Lord, lettest now Thy servant  
Depart in peace," she said,  
And early the next morning  
The dear old soul was dead.

Gone rejoicing to await  
The time when Christ will come  
To welcome his dear children  
To their eternal home.

It is our great desire,  
By prayer and Bible teaching,  
To train our dear young people  
For this happy meeting.

---

My task at last is ended,  
A pleasing task of days,  
And should success attend it  
To God be all the praise.





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